

A Precedent in Arrogance Is Set

BY VICTOR RIESEL

During Jimmie Hoffa's trial, investigators were hired to investigate the federal investigators — to trail them, photograph them and intercept their official car-to-car coded short wave conversations.

Apparently he did not think this sufficient harassment, for he also dashed into the third floor corridor of the federal building screaming at the U.S. marshals, calling them "bums" and "trench coat stormtroopers."

So now a new Chattanooga grand jury is probing all this—and more. Its first subpoena was handed to a self-confessed wire-tapper, who boasts of his skill as an electronic eavesdropper.

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He is Bernard Spindel, a burly, long-time friend of Hoffa, who has associated with and worked for "the boss" for almost a decade. Spindel, who has known some mighty tough characters in New York City, amazingly enough admits intercepting official messages exchanged by federal agents during the trial. Nor does he deny that he was hired by Hoffa to come to Chattanooga—all of which intrigues the grand jury.

This admission is made in an affidavit signed by Spindel and attached to a lengthy transcript of his monitoring of the federal agents' oral communications. The objective of this strategy was to get these documents to the judge in an effort to force a mistrial and avert a conviction of the "chief."

Since Spindel's action sets a precedent in trial tactics—as well as in arrogance—I want to put part of the affidavit on record here:

"Bernard B. Spindel, being first duly sworn, makes oath as follows," the statement begins, "that affiant (Bernard



Spindel) is an expert electronic technician specializing in detection of listening and/or monitoring devices and other means of such surveillance as wire-tapping, shadowing and eavesdropping, as well as other contrivances;

"That affiant has been retained to detect whether or not there is or has been surveillance of the defendants, and/or their attorneys;

"That affiant arrived in Chattanooga, Tenn., on Monday afternoon, the 3d of February, 1964;

"That during the affiant's investigation (he) employed certain electronic equipment and came across a vast network of

conversations of individuals;

"That these conversations were by U.S. government agents and that their conversations were coded in great part;

"That affiant is familiar with the practice and customs of persons employing these codes and he is able to translate certain initials, words and statements from their present form into their intended meaning; that during the course of affiant's investigation, he made notes regarding the conversations he heard."

The federal men swiftly learned of Spindel's activities, but they had nothing to hide, so they continued their work despite harassment by this eavesdropper-for-hire.

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Only the Dept. of Justice, the FBI and officers of the federal marshals know exactly why special agents roamed the city in radio cars or were posted in buildings to scan the streets with binoculars. Obviously there were good security reasons for this which in no way concerned Spindel himself. But he not only monitored the U.S. officials, he made his information available to others who had retained him to spy.

Can private citizens interfere with federal agents under immunity? Are electronic eavesdroppers and their clients bigger than the government itself? That's what the grand jury wants to know. So does the public.

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